

I am enclosing a copy of the Executive Order and proclamation I have issued.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
June 26, 2008.

### **Remarks at the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast**

June 26, 2008

**The President.** *Gracias. Sientese.* [Laughter] Luis, thank you, sir. So he asked, would I come to the prayer breakfast. My answer was, *por supuesto*. [Laughter] I am honored to join you. I was proud to stand with you in 2002 at the first National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast, and today I am proud to stand with you at the—for the final time as your sitting President.

This happens to be an important event, in my view. It's an important event because it reminds us that no matter what our status in life might be, that we have a duty to respond to a higher power.

**Audience member.** Amen!

**The President.** You know, next year in Crawford, Laura and I are going to have a different kind of prayer breakfast. I'll be cooking the eggs, and she'll be praying I don't burn them. [Laughter]

I do want to welcome the First Lady of Panama, Vivian Fernandez de Torrijos. Thank you for coming. As some of you may or may not know, the—*mi ninita* lived in Panama for a while, and the government and the people there were so kind and hospitable, and I'll never be able to repay you for that. So thank you very much. Please give your *esposo* my best regards, *el Presidente de Panama*. Si, thank you.

Proud to be here with pastors and community leaders. Thank you for doing what you're doing.

Each of you here this morning is here to celebrate a simple and powerful act, prayer to an Almighty God. You know the comfort that comes from placing our worries in the hands of a higher power. You know the humility that comes from approaching our Maker on bended knee. And you know the strength that comes from lifting our thoughts

from worldly cares and focusing on the eternal.

Today I ask all to join together to pray that God continues to bestow His blessings on our wonderful country. We pray that the Almighty will strengthen America's families. A caring family is the foundation of a hopeful society. We pray that every child in America can grow up in a loving and stable home. We pray for the day when every child in America is welcomed in life and protected in law. And we pray that in every community across this great land, the Almighty will strengthen *los valores de la familia y de la fe*.

We pray that America will strengthen those who serve *nuestros hermanos y hermanas* in need. We pray for the continued success of faith-based and community groups like Esperanza, all aiming to transfer [transform] \* our great country one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. I was proud to hear of the work of Esperanza in Philadelphia. I've known Esperanza for *ochos años*. I was first impressed by the vision of making sure that every child gets a good education. It's Luis who started a charter school. It's a tremendous school. Less than 1 percent of students drop out, and more than 90 percent of the graduates are planning to go to college this fall. There's nothing more hopeful than to give a child a good education.

I'm impressed by the program called Esperanza Trabajando. This program helps at-risk youths and former prisoners move from lives of hopelessness to futures of accomplishment and self-sufficiency. Esperanza Trabajando, for those of you who don't speak Spanish—and frankly, mine isn't all that good—[laughter]—means “Hope is Working,” and that's exactly what you are demonstrating, Luis, and others in this room demonstrate *cada dia*—every day.

For the past 8 years, my administration has provided unprecedented support for the compassionate work performed by faith-based and community groups, because I understand this: Government can hand out money, but government cannot put hope in a person's heart. And oftentimes that is found in our faith community and our community

\* White House correction.

organizations. And so we've lowered the barriers that kept government and faith-based groups needlessly divided and ensured that America's armies of compassion are at the center of our Nation's efforts to make our society more hopeful for every individual.

Organizations like yours have shown the ability to save and change lives. And in your mercies of love and mercy, you must always have a strong and reliable partner in government.

We pray that Almighty will strengthen and protect those who serve the cause of freedom. These brave men and women share our cherished belief that the desire for liberty is written by the Almighty in every human heart. We believe in the universality of freedom. And where we see people suffer from forms of government that create hopelessness or disease and hunger and mosquito bites, that deny people a hopeful life, the United States must act under the theory, under the principle that to whom much is given, much is required.

**Audience member.** Amen!

**The President.** I'm impressed—deeply impressed by those who wear our Nation's uniform. I appreciate—some have given their lives, others have suffered injuries in freedom's cause. And this morning I am honored to note that five brave servicemen who are being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are with us today. We thank you for your sacrifice; we pray for your recovery; and we honor your service to the United States of America.

This, like, might not be on the schedule, but if you five guys would mind letting me have my picture taken with you, I'd be honored. So, like, when the speech is about to end, which is soon—[laughter]—head to the exits, and I'll see you.

We also honor those who struggle for freedom against oppressive regimes. It's essential that the United States always remember—in our great comfort—that we always remember that there are those who want their freedom just like we have our freedom. One of those men is Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leiva. He's a lawyer and human rights activist on the island of Cuba. Juan Carlos was unjustly jailed for more than 2 years by the Cuban regime because he supported a dissident

journalist. While he was imprisoned, his cane and his dark glasses were confiscated, which is especially cruel because Juan Carlos is blind. The guards took away his braille Bible, but they could not take away his spirit. Today, Juan Carlos is no longer in jail, but he remains under the surveillance of the Cuban Government.

Juan Carlos continues his important fight for human rights in Cuba, and the United States must always stand squarely with those who struggle for their human rights against tyranny. And today we're honored that his *hermano* is with us. Onel Ramon Gonzalez Leiva is here on his behalf. Onel, we want to thank you for coming. Our prayers go out to your brother and those who struggle with him. And we ask for the day, we pray for the day when the light of liberty shines on the people of Cuba and those who long for freedom. Onel, *bienvenidos*.

So as I mentioned, this is my last visit as your President to the Hispanic Prayer Breakfast. It's been a joy every time I have come. During the last 7½ years, I have been touched by how many Americans have come up and said, "I'm praying for you, Mr. President"—people I've never seen before in my life, may never see again. It's amazing. You would think they would come up and say, you know, "I'd like a new highway," or "How about an additional bridge?" [Laughter] But, no, total strangers come and say, "I just want you to know, we lift you up in prayer." Somebody asked me what all that meant, and I said, well, you know, I'm finally beginning to understand the story of the calm in the rough seas. And I attribute it to the fact that millions of people have been so kind and generous to pray for me and Laura.

And so on my final trip here as your sitting President, I thank you for your prayers. I can't thank you enough for your spiritual support. And it's made a significant difference during these 7½ years. Being your President has been an unimaginable honor and a joyous experience.

Thank you, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 a.m. at the JW Marriott Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Luis Cortes, Jr., president, Esperanza; and President Martin Torrijos Espino of Panama. The

Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### **Remarks at the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives' National Conference**

*June 26, 2008*

Thank you very much. Please be seated. Now how beautiful was that; from being a homeless mother of two to introducing the President of the United States. There has to be a higher power. I love being with members of the armies of compassion, foot soldiers in helping make America a more hopeful place. Every day, you mend broken hearts with love. You mend broken lives with hope, and you mend broken communities with countless acts of extraordinary kindness.

Groups like yours have harnessed the power that no government bureaucracy can match. So when I came to Washington, my goal was to ensure that government made you a full partner in our efforts to serve those in need. And the results have been uplifting, and that's what we're here to talk about today. It's an opportunity to celebrate your achievements, to thank you for your life-changing work, and to look ahead to ways that you will extend your record of compassion in the years to come.

I really want to thank Jay Hein and those who worked hard to put on this conference. It looks like it's a successful one from here. I'm honored that members of the administration have come—the Attorney General, Judge Michael Mukasey. Mr. General, thanks for coming. Secretary Ed Schafer, Department of Agriculture; Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, Department of Commerce; Director John Walters, Office of National Drug Control Policy—thank you all for taking time to be here.

Ambassador Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator—Mark, thanks for coming; appreciate you being here. I'm going to talk about PEPFAR in a minute. But when I talk about PEPFAR, think about his extraordinary leadership, as I do.

I want to thank the Ambassador from the Republic of Rwanda. Mr. Ambassador, I'm proud you're here. And I want to thank all

of those who've come around the country who work in our Faith-Based and Community Initiative for your leadership and your compassion and your decency.

You know, when I ran for President, like a lot of others around our country, I was troubled to see so many of our citizens' greatest needs going unmet. Too many addicts walked the rough road of recovery alone. Too many prisoners had the desire for reform, but no one showed them a way. Across the country, the hungry and the homeless, the sick and the suffering begged for deliverance, and too many heard only silence.

And the tragedy that was—a lot of good folks in America—a lot of good men and women who had the desire to help, but didn't have the resources—they had the heart, but not the resources. And because many of them worked with small charities, they were overlooked by Washington as potential partners in service. And because many of them belonged to faith-based organizations, they were often barred from receiving support from the Federal Government.

So I set about to change that, at least from the Federal perspective, with an approach called compassionate conservatism. This approach was compassionate because it was rooted in a timeless truth: That we ought to love our neighbors as we'd like to be loved ourselves. And it was conservative because it recognized the limits of government. Bureaucracies can put money in people's hands, but they cannot put hope in a person's heart.

Putting hope in people's hearts is the mission of our Nation's faith-based and community groups. And today we're going to herald some of the results of the collective work of compassionate Americans. To me, it does not matter if there's a crescent on your group's wall, a rabbi on your group's board, or Christ in your group's name. If your organization puts medicine in the people's hands, food in people's mouths, or a roof over people's heads, then you're succeeding. And for the sake of our country, the Government ought to support your work.

I was reviewing my first major policy speech as a candidate for President. It seems like a long time ago—July 22, 1999. Here's what I said. I said: "In every instance where my administration sees a responsibility to